DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 459 601 FL 026 856

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TITLE Students Working with an English Learners' Dictionary on CD-ROM.
PUB DATE 2001-06-00
NOTE 30p.; In: ELT Perspectives on Information Technology & Multimedia: Selected Papers from the ITMELT 2001 Conference (Hong Kong, June 1-2, 2001). Hong Kong, The English Language Centre, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. p227-254.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/conference/papers2001/winklet.htm.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Computer Uses in Education; *Dictionaries; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Lexicography; *Optical Data Disks; Second Language Instruction; *Second Language Learning; Vocabulary Development

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the growing literature on pedagogical lexicography and the growing focus on how well the learner uses the dictionary in second language learning. Dictionaries are becoming more user-friendly. This study used the writing task to reveal new insights into how students use a CD-ROM dictionary. It found a lack of dictionary-using skills in certain areas, particularly true of the appendices and the structure of the individual entries. Students typically did not have the skills to access much of the information contained in the dictionary--in print or on CD-ROM. It is suggested that CD-ROM dictionaries offer a more extensive guided tour of the dictionary that is built into the program. This would help students with navigational issues but also with more fully understanding the content of the individual entries. CD-ROM dictionaries in particular could offer a lot more useful tools to students, including more cultural details, synonyms, and technical details. A bilingual dictionary might also be helpful as it would enable and assist students in finding words they do not know and, therefore, cannot look up in a monolingual English learners' dictionary. Appended is a questionnaire for students on the use of English Learners' Dictionaries. (Contains 27 references.) (KFT)

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Students working with an English learners' dictionary on CD-ROM

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Introduction

Dictionary research

A growing awareness of the dictionary user can clearly be seen in research literature of the last few years. The importance of the user perspective was pointed out by Gertrud Stein in her lecture at the inauguration of the Dictionary Research Centre in Exeter.

> Dictionaries are obviously written for their users. We therefore need much more research on the dictionary user, his needs, his expectations, and his prejudices (Stein, 1984: 4).

Hartmann (1987) likewise felt that "there may be a mismatch...between the information provided by the dictionary maker and the help required by the dictionary user" (p.11).

A number of empirical studies can be situated in this recent field of dictionary research, focusing not on the linguistic content and structure of dictionaries but on their users (Atkins, 1998; Cowie, 1999; Hartmann, 1999, Rundell 1999, Scholfield 1999). Pedagogical lexicography has been further stimulated in recent decades by a greater interest in *learning* and *the learner* (Dolezal & McCreary, 1999). In the last few years, a number of user-centred studies have also been carried out in the field of learners' dictionaries and their findings have helped to make such dictionaries more user-friendly.

Apart from faults in the design of learners' dictionaries, a number of these studies highlighted particular problems for their users, who were unable to make full use of the vast amount of information provided in reference works because they lacked dictionary skills. An important reason for this seemed to be the inadequate or insufficient training of learners in the use of dictionaries (Berwick & Horsfall, 1996; Wright, 1998; Nesi, 1999; Nesi, 2000b).

It seems, however, that we still do not have enough information about what happens when dictionaries are consulted. Bogaards (1992) claims that "... next to nothing is known about how dictionary users, foreign learner users or others, go about finding their way in these valuable sources of information" (p.51). Kernermann (1996) talks of "a dire need for research in the behaviour and habits of users of learners' dictionaries" (p.405). Atkins highlights similar needs in her 1998 collection of studies of dictionary use by language learners and translators. Only by finding out more about how dictionaries are actually used, will we be able to create better reference books and gain enough information to enable us to effectively teach learners dictionary skills. In her foreword to *Using Dictionaries*, Atkins suggests:

> Dictionary consultation is highly complex: many more... experiments are needed before lexicographers have enough information to allow them to make reasoned changes in dictionary design and before those teaching dictionary skills know enough about their students' attitudes and habits to guide them through the decision-making steps of the dictionary look-up (1998: 5).

As regards learners' dictionaries on CD-ROM, it appears that even more research remains to be done. Due to the fact that such dictionaries have only been available for a few years, hardly any empirical studies on their use have been conducted so far (research has been carried out by Guillot & Kenning, 1994; Sharpe, 1995; and Nesi, 1999).

Dictionary-Using Skills

> Dictionaries are among the most readily available, widely used, and cheapest learning resources ... [but] they are also among the most difficult to use (Wright 1998: 5).

A dictionary is not just another book. In order to be able to read this special book and use it effectively, users need certain skills - defined by Hartmann and James in their *Dictionary of Lexicography* (1998) as "the abilities required...to find the information being sought" (p.117) - and specific training. Used appropriately, the dictionary can be an invaluable tool for learners of a foreign language; without proper skills, however, the dictionary can be as much of a hindrance as a help (Berwick & Horsfall, 1996). It seems, however, that many language learners lack appropriate skills and, moreover, hardly receive any dictionary training (Tono, 1984; Wright, 1998).

Wright claims that one reason for this is that dictionaries have to an extent been side-lined by the communicative methodologies that have dominated language teaching in recent years. Such teaching methods aim at encouraging students to take risks and do all sorts of guesswork to help them develop communicative strategies to overcome language problems. Formulating hypotheses and trying them out is seen as the basis of much learning and making mistakes is accepted as a natural part of the learning process. "With dictionaries, however, we tend to expect right answers, exact meanings, correct spelling and pronunciation, and there is no scope for error. This perhaps makes them appear rather intimidating and authoritarian" (Wright, 1998: 10). Moreover, dictionaries are widely regarded as books that are consulted in private, for individual learning problems.

The dictionary as a learning and teaching tool is a fairly new concept (Hartmann & James, 1998), so that actual dictionary use among teachers and learners is "an area where little is known and much may be improved" (ibid.). Tickoo (1989) believes years of neglecting vocabulary and its teaching, and of criticising the learning of words in isolation have fostered negative attitudes towards dictionaries.

Although the pedagogic dictionary has recently been more widely used as an educational aid and a learning tool, Brumfit (1985) claims that quite often the dictionary is taken for granted and under-utilized. Similarly, Tickoo (1989) argues that the dictionary is a rich resource, but poorly used. Students fail to exploit the immense amount of information provided since they have received "insufficient help on how to make the best use of dictionaries" (p.iii). He therefore calls for better training, of teachers, and even more so of users, and claims that the recent developments in learners' dictionaries require an even "higher degree of ... dictionary literacy". Tickoo also believes that learners need to be more aware of what is on offer and develop skills to be able to take advantage of that.

In a recent study on dictionary reference skills in higher education, Nesi comes to a similar conclusion: most foreign language students at British universities have no dictionary skills and "don't in general ever use monolingual dictionaries. They use bilingual ones badly" (1999: 65). According to this study, there is also insufficient dictionary skill training at university level. Moreover, any such dictionary lessons would not usually be part of the overall language teaching programme.

In recent years more attention has been paid to deliberate instruction with or without the use of such teaching aids as Dictionary Workbooks (see Stark's critical analysis and comparison of 40 dictionary workbooks, published in 1990). However, very little is known still about the behaviour and preferences of dictionary users, and the complex operations involved in dictionary consultation (Hartmann & James, 1998).

This is even more true for electronic dictionaries which have only been available for a few years and whose use has been investigated in only a few research studies so far (Guillot & Kenning 1994, Sharpe 1995, Nesi 2000a). In lexicography, computation has revolutionised not only the dictionary-making process but also both the conception and treatment of reference systems. Apart from the use of multimedia (sound and animation have certainly contributed to making dictionaries much more attractive and interesting lexical resources), the varied possibilities of search and access methods allow the user to specify the output in a number of ways. Access and retrieval of information are no longer determined by the internal, traditionally alphabetic, organisation of the dictionary or the structure of the input.

Most dictionaries on CD-ROM not only offer an A-Z list of words, but also audio and visual elements as well as exercises and games. The huge amount of information that is thus available makes such a dictionary an utterly novel reference tool. If this were to be fully developed, it would serve not only as a reference but also language learning tool, and this to a much greater extent than dictionaries in paper-based form would ever be able to do.

However, the demands on the user of such a dictionary are also greater as the emphasis is less on following a predetermined path through the dictionary structure and more on navigating relationships across and within entries via a choice of links.

To date, such changes in dictionary design have not been reflected in the specification of dictionary skills. There are no *Workbooks* for dictionaries on CD-ROM available and the explanations provided in manuals as well as *Help* facilities included in the dictionary do not offer enough support to the user. The reasons for this are perhaps obvious: dictionaries on CD-ROM are still fairly new and costly and, moreover, quite often not available in English language teaching institutions.

The latter also explains why training in electronic dictionary skills has so far been neglected (Nesi 1999).

The Study

Aims

The study set out to investigate how learners of English as a foreign language learners use an English learner's dictionary, in book form and on CD-ROM (hereafter referred to as ELD-CD). The intention was to provide some insight into students' look-up processes and to examine the effectiveness of such a dictionary as an aid for writing.

The focus here will be on the searches that the students carried out with the CD-ROM dictionary and describe the problems that they encountered. Students' dictionary-using skills and look-up strategies will be discussed together with how users of an ELD-CD have to adapt to the electronic medium.

This paper suggests which aspects of an ELD-CD could be improved in content and presentation to make them more user-friendly, as well as better reference and language learning tools.

Overview of the study

This empirical study tried to recreate a *natural* language learning situation by focusing on a writing activity, which was carried out by thirty upper-intermediate/advanced students of English. All participants were taking English classes at universities or English language schools in Britain.

For the writing task, the students had to choose a topic and then spend half an hour composing a short text on screen, for which they were allowed to use an English learner's dictionary, first in book form and then on CD-ROM. An introduction to the task and a demonstration of the CD-ROM dictionary were given before students were asked to start writing their texts. After this induction, which lasted for twenty to thirty minutes, the

participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire, to provide some background information on their use and attitude towards dictionaries. Think-aloud protocols and researcher's notes on students' look-ups during the writing process, captured what happened when students searched for information in the dictionary.

Participants

The study was undertaken at nine English language centres of British universities and at three private English language schools in England. Each centre or school was visited once or twice.

The thirty participants were all studying to improve their English for tertiary-level academic purposes and had been classified as being upper-intermediate or advanced by their language tutors. They were of various nationalities: 11 were from Europe (1 Greek, 2 German, 2 Italian, 1 Slovak, 3 Spanish, 2 Swiss), 16 from Asian countries (2 Chinese, 7 Japanese, 1 Omani, 3 Taiwanese, 1 Thai, 2 Turkish), 2 from South America (Brazil) and 1 from Africa (Ethiopia). 18 of the students were female (60%), 12 were male (40%).

Dictionaries used

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 5th ed. (OALD5) was chosen for the study. It is representative of other similar dictionaries for learners of English. It was readily available, and felt to be user-friendly and suitable for both task and participants. Students had access to both the book and the CD-ROM dictionary. The electronic version is based on the printed reference work but offers more visual information as well as pronunciation and games. The CD-ROM dictionary also allows the user to carry out searches impossible with the book dictionary: the whole can be searched for every instance of a word, for example, or the user can restrict searches by using Boolean operators and filters.

Methodology

Data were collected using the following methods:

- a questionnaire;
- a writing task: students had to compose a short text on-screen for which they had access to the dictionary in book form and on CD-ROM;
- tape-recordings of students' remarks during the writing task: students were encouraged to think aloud;
- record-sheets of students' look-ups (notes were taken by the researcher).

The dictionary tour

Before working on the tasks, students were given a dictionary tour, which lasted about twenty to thirty minutes. The tour mainly demonstrated the most important facilities of the dictionary on CD-ROM, but also explicitly compared different presentations of the same entry on paper and on screen. It was possible to indicate such innovations as colours, windows and the audio facility, and to find out whether particular features, such as codes and symbols, abbreviations and technical terms were familiar to the students. The various sections of the CD-ROM dictionary, with its specific search facilities and features, were shown to the students as well as the link to Word and the *Copy* function. The advanced technique of *Full Text* searches was explained, so that students were able to either explore the whole dictionary for a specific term or to confine themselves to particular parts of an entry. Combined searches using Boolean operators and filtered searches (studying subject areas or register information) were also demonstrated.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was usually administered before students started working on the writing task and consisted of twenty-six questions. It was designed to provide information about the personal details of each informant; students' use of and attitude towards paper and computer based English dictionaries; and practicalities such as frequency

of consultation, dictionary training, and experience in using printed and/or electronic dictionaries.

The writing task

The writing task involved composing a short text on-screen in half an hour, for which students had to work on their own. They were asked to choose from among nine topics (see below), all of which were very general, so that they could write a short text without much preparation and within the given time. While working on the text, students had access to OALD5 in book form for the first half of the session and were then allowed to use the CD-ROM.

The introduction emphasised that a well-structured essay was not expected. To make students feel less apprehensive about writing, the researcher told them that their dictionary look-ups were the focus of interest, rather than the quality of their text.

The following topics were offered:
Advertising – pros and cons;
Environmental problems and solutions;
Traditional and alternative medicine;
Tourism – advantages and disadvantages;
Technological development – your view;
Genetic engineering;
Crime and punishment;
Studying abroad – your experience;
Own choice of topic.

As the writing task focused on students' dictionary searches, students were encouraged to think aloud and their utterances were recorded. The researcher also noted each time the reason(s) for the look-up, whether or not information had been found and where, how easy/difficult the search had been, what strategies students had applied, and finally students' actions after failed searches. It was assumed that in some cases the researcher would have to ask students to clarify specific

aspects of their searches and that it would be necessary to assist students with more complex searches.

Students' texts

Students' texts were stored on disk both for record purposes and to learn more about the context of each look-up. This also provided a better picture of the progression of students' searches, and gave an initial impression of the skills they possessed and the strategies they employed. As the main focus of the study was the book and CD-ROM dictionary searches, the texts were not evaluated nor were the students' mistakes corrected.

Students' comments

During the look-up process, students were encouraged to think aloud. By doing this, the rather "private" activity of looking up words in a dictionary would become more transparent. Nevertheless, it was sometimes necessary to "interfere" because not all students were prepared to talk about their searches or because some details had to be clarified. These interruptions were, however, kept to a minimum.

Findings

A taxonomy of dictionary skills

The skills list derived below is based on that of Nesi (1999) but has been modified to refer specifically to this study. It separates the additional skills that are necessary for using the CD-ROM dictionary (indicated by "CD-ROM"). It groups, under four headings, those skills the participants seemed to find helpful when carrying out the task.

Before dictionary consultation

- Knowing what kinds of information can be found in an English learners'dictionary in book form
- CD-ROM: realizing that additional information is available, such as audio and visual elements, exercises and games

- Deciding whether dictionary consultation is necessary (e.g. contextual guessing of the meaning of the look-up item)
- Understanding the structure of the paper-based dictionary
- CD-ROM: understanding the presentation in windows
- Understanding typographical conventions, and the use of symbols and punctuation
- CD-ROM: knowing how to use hyperlinks to display the full term displayed in pop-up windows
- Knowing how to use the guide to the book dictionary/ the Help facility of the CD-ROM dictionary

Locating the dictionary entry

- Deciding what to look up
- CD-ROM: deciding on the type of search (headword, filtered or full text search) and understanding how advanced searches work
- Deciding on an appropriate (citation) form of the look-up item
- CD-ROM: understanding the function of the Wordwheel
- Understanding alphabetisation and letter distribution
- Understanding graphic-phonemic correspondence (and the lack of it)
- CD-ROM: understanding how to use the Spellchecker
- Identifying the word-class of the look-up item (also choosing among homonyms)
- Knowing how to find derived forms and multi-word units
- CD-ROM: understanding how to use the Wordwheel and Contents area
- CD-ROM: understanding how to use advanced searches (*Wildcards* and *Types*)

Interpreting entry information

- Distinguishing the component parts of the entry
- Finding information about the spelling of words
- Interpreting the IPA and pronunciation of words
- CD-ROM: knowing how to use the audio facility
- Interpreting grammar and syntax information
- CD-ROM: knowing how to use filters

- Interpreting the definition(s)
- Understanding and deriving information from examples
- Interpreting information about idiomatic use
- Interpreting restrictive labels
- Knowing how to find information about collocations, synonyms and antonyms
- Knowing how to carry out cross-references / use hypertext links

Finding required details and applying dictionary information

- Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information
  - CD-ROM: knowing how to confine searches to the information required
- Scanning dictionary entries
  - CD-ROM: (possibly) restricting search to particular sections, such as idioms and phrasal verbs
- Sifting out the information needed
- Referring to additional dictionary information in front matter or appendices
  - CD-ROM: referring to additional information in various CD-ROM sections
- Using the information found in an appropriate way
  - CD-ROM: using the link to Microsoft Word and the copy-function
- Recording the dictionary information in a vocabulary notebook
  - CD-ROM: recording it in electronic form via the Annotations
  - CD-ROM: practising vocabulary by working through exercises

Dictionary-using skills for the CD-ROM dictionary

All participants agreed that it was much easier, quicker and more convenient to carry out searches with the CD-ROM dictionary. However, it was also obvious that effective use, especially of complex searches, demanded user skills apart from the conventional dictionary skills.

Users needed to familiarize themselves with the way information is presented on screen. They also needed to discover the different features and facilities that the CD-ROM dictionary offers, such as pronunciation and various search facilities including wildcards and Boolean operators. Furthermore, there are features unique to a CD-ROM dictionary, such as the *Wordwheel*, the Spellchecker and the link to Microsoft Word that are particular to a CD-ROM dictionary.

Special navigational skills are, however, not only required for moving around the A-Z list of headwords but also in order to be able to switch between and explore the various sections contained in the OALD5-CD: the pictures, exercises and games.

Particular problems of students' searches in the CD-ROM dictionary, students' skills and the strategies they used are now discussed.

Problems associated with before dictionary consultation

Some students were not sure about what an English learner's dictionary contains, and were unaware of the information usually found in the front matter and appendices. With the CD-ROM dictionary, students expected to find more information than in its paper-based counterpart, namely, cultural details, synonyms and technical terms.

The demonstration in the dictionary tour was not effective in enabling all students to carry out every search on their own, and they had to be assisted by the researcher. It seems that without guidance of some kind, the user will find it difficult to exploit the dictionary and to make sense of the outcome of advanced searches.

As expected, even some of the higher-level students had great difficulties in dealing with abbreviations, codes and symbols. The help that the CD-ROM dictionaries offer in this respect by displaying the full term in a pop-up window when double-

clicking on the symbol or abbreviation was appreciated by all participants. However, this information did not seem to be sufficient for all students. Students avoided the codes (especially the grammar codes) and tried to use the information given in example sentences instead.

Problems locating the dictionary entry

At upper-intermediate level or above, participants had few problems deciding what to look up and the form the look-up should take. In a number of cases, it was necessary though to cross-refer another word as the definition included the word that it explained (*pollution* was defined as "the process of polluting sth. or the state of being polluted"). The latest edition of OALD would have been more helpful in this respect as many words have been given headword status and definitions have been rewritten.

In general, the Wordwheel was felt to be very useful. The user gets closer to the look-up the more letters are typed in. The required item can then be selected from a drop-down list of headwords. This makes it easier to locate derivatives and compounds which can also be accessed from the Contents list. However, users must know what the term "derivative" means. Additionally, if a student got the beginning of an entry word wrong, it was then impossible to find with the Wordwheel, since the OALD5-CD does not include a Spellchecker. Though this has been remedied in OALD6-CD, even the latest version would not have helped a student who mis-spelt *sale* (he used its homophone *sail* instead), since the Spellchecker highlights only non-existent word forms – a feature it shares with Microsoft Word. Another student who also relied on the spelling check facility too much, used *hospital* in her text instead of *hospitable*. She decided against checking the word in the dictionary although she was not sure whether it was the right item, because "Microsoft Word would have told her if there was a mistake".

Lexicalising unknown words in the foreign language obviously caused immense problems because it is difficult to locate a word by sense alone. All the students who encountered this problem said that they would turn to the bilingual dictionary to solve such a problem rather than searching in a monolingual dictionary, which might prove fruitless.

Finding idiomatic phrases with unknown forms also proved difficult. One particular student tried to find an idiom that included *hand* but was unable to find the phrase he needed amongst a list of more than seventy items.

Problems interpreting the entry information

Although many students were familiar with the structure of an entry, interpreting the information given under a headword did not always seem to be easy. Problems occurred especially with longer entries. Even though less information is displayed on screen and searches can be restricted, most students found it difficult to scan long entries for the information needed. OALD6 presents such items better as Short Cuts allow users to go straight to the meaning that is relevant for their purpose.

A few students had difficulty finding particular details given at the beginning of an entry, such as irregular plural forms. Register information seemed equally difficult to handle for some students.

Grammatical and syntactical information was mainly derived from example sentences as hardly any students knew what the codes and abbreviations used in the dictionary stood for and they simply ignored them.

Collocations and synonyms appeared to be one of the most problematic areas in the study as students of a higher level often want to find ways of expressing themselves in a more sophisticated way but lack the lexical repertoire to achieve this. Unfortunately, the dictionary only offers limited help this respect Some students therefore either replaced the word they

did not want to repeat with one they had found in the definition, or they gave up. OALD6 offers synonyms and antonyms in a number of entries, partly solving the above problem.

Hyperlinks were extremely useful as they allowed students easily and quickly to cross-refer to words they wanted to look up within entries. They checked a number of words by using this facility.

Problems finding required details and applying dictionary information

Skills like distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information and scanning entries seemed to be associated with the 'good dictionary user', who was able to focus on the information that was important for his/her search. This type of user often also had ideas for more advanced searches by either combining search terms or restricting the search to a particular section. For these more confined searches, help had to be given by the researcher initially due to their complex nature.

The advanced search facility allows the whole of the dictionary to be searched for every instance of a word. Students had thus hoped to find useful words for their texts and get ideas of what to write about. However, *Full Text Searches* were not always very fruitful as the outcome could either be a long list of more than 200 items (e.g. *music*) or only a few words (e.g. *genetic engineering*), depending on the search term. Moreover, the list often contained words, which were not useful to the students at all. Sometimes the search results list was even confusing! When one student tried to look up *IT*, he was offered a long list including many instances of *it* because the search is not case-sensitive. The same happened with *China*, which yielded results also for the citation from *china*.

In general, it seems that the advanced search facility of the CD-ROM dictionary offers the user more than the book dictionary but it would have to be modified in order to be really helpful.

One step in this direction has been made by the 3-D search that is part of OALD6-CD.

Concerning additional information included in the dictionary, the Maps section seemed to be especially attractive. Most students who had a chance to consult this section wanted to find their own country but were usually disappointed at the lack of cultural and encyclopaedic information provided, as the dictionary merely lists the names for those countries (including their inhabitants), which are non-English-speaking and non-European.

Successful application of dictionary information depended very much on how this was presented in the dictionary and also on the skills of the dictionary user. It was successful, for example, in the case of *nowadays*, where the respective student not only had been able to correct her spelling mistake but had also noticed the position of this adverb in the sentence. It was unsuccessful in the case of *economic* and *economical* since the student had not understood the difference between these two adjectives and thus chosen the wrong word for her sentence.

There was no time for the students to make use of the Annotations facility. Exercises are not included in this particular CD-ROM dictionary.

Conclusion

The study with the Writing Task revealed new insights into how students use a CD-ROM dictionary. The problems the students encountered revealed a lack of dictionary-using skills in certain areas. Some of the participants were not aware of the information that can generally be found in an English learner's dictionary. This, however, was not only true for the front matter and the appendices but also for the structure of individual entries. Also, even higher-level students had difficulty with scanning long entries or finding particular details and often

gave up such searches. Abbreviations, codes and symbols were avoided altogether and the grammatical and syntactical information needed were derived from example sentences. With the CD-ROM dictionary, students were required to acquire further, navigational and searching skills, apart from the more "conventional dictionary skills" referred to above. Especially complex searches were difficult to handle for the participants.

The outcome of the study also suggests the need for improvements to the CD-ROM dictionary. In order to optimise the benefits to its users, a guided tour should be offered, which would introduce users to the features and facilities of the dictionary, similar to the one provided for the participants before the actual task. This would not only help students with navigational problems but also allow them to carry out various searches and to explore the contents of the CD-ROM dictionary. An improved facility for spelling problems would also be helpful. The storage space available on a CD-ROM should allow for the inclusion of further, useful information, such as more cultural details, synonyms and technical terms, as requested by a number of the participants. Finally, a hybrid form, in the shape of a bilingualised dictionary may be desirable as well since such a dictionary would assist students in finding words they do not know and therefore cannot look up in a monolingual English learners' dictionary.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Michael Evans for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper as well as Bruce Morrison and David Gardner for their helpful critical guidance with the final drafting. I am also grateful to those English language institutions in Britain and their students that took part in my study. My attendance at the conference would not have been possible without the kind financial support of the Institute of Educational Technology at the Open University in Milton Keynes, England.

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE for STUDENTS

Use of English Learner's Dictionaries

The following questionnaire is part of a survey that is being carried out in Britain. It aims at finding out more about the actual use of dictionaries by learners of English and their attitudes towards dictionaries in printed and electronic form. The outcome of the study should help to find ways of improving such dictionaries and enhancing dictionary skills.

I would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions by filling in information or by ticking boxes where appropriate. **All your answers will remain confidential**.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this study on the use of learner's dictionaries!

Nationality: _____
Mother language(s): _____
Gender: O female O male

1. How many years and where have you been learning English?

_____
_____

2. What English course are you doing and how long is it? Please specify.
course:

_____
> length: _____

3. Why are you doing this course?
- ☐ I want to improve my English
- ☐ I want to study at a British university
- ☐ I need English for my job
- ☐ I want to do a particular exam
- ☐ Other (please explain):

_____

4. What type of dictionary do you OWN? (Choose more than one if appropriate)
- ☐ bilingual: English/mother language
- ☐ monolingual: English-English
- ☐ specialised (e.g. Business English)
- ☐ thesaurus
- ☐ general encyclopedia

5. What size are your dictionaries?
bilingual:
- ☐ pocket
- ☐ medium-sized (concise)
- ☐ comprehensive

monolingual:
- ☐ pocket
- ☐ medium-sized (concise)
- ☐ comprehensive

specialised
- ☐ pocket
- ☐ medium-sized (concise)
- ☐ comprehensive

6. Which dictionary do you use most frequently? Please provide the following information about this dictionary.
   title: _____
   publisher: _____
   year of publication: _____
   any other detail: _____

7. Which of the following English-English dictionaries do you own?
   - ☐ Collins Cobuild English Dictionary
   - ☐ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English
   - ☐ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
   - ☐ Cambridge International Dictionary of English
   - ☐ Longman Language Activator
   - ☐ Oxford Wordpower Dictionary
   - ☐ Collins Cobuild Student's Dictionary
   - ☐ Other: _____

8. Do you possess any specialized dictionaries?
   - ☐ yes, such as _____ ☐ no
   - ☐ Business English
   - ☐ English for Marketing
   - ☐ English for Law
   - ☐ Other: _____
   - ☐ Dictionary of Pronunciation
   - ☐ Dictionary of Idioms
   - ☐ Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs
   - ☐ Dictionary of Common Errors
   - ☐ Other: _____

9. When did you buy your last dictionary? year:_____
   Which dictionary did you buy? _____
   Why did you buy it?
   _____
   _____

10. When you last BOUGHT a particular dictionary, was it (you can choose more than one)
   - ☐ because a teacher recommended it
   - ☐ because a friend or other person had it
   - ☐ a result of your own choice
   - ☐ a result of an advertisement
   - ☐ other (please explain): _____
   - ☐ I cannot remember

11. Are you planning to buy a dictionary in the near future?
   - ☐ yes
     which dictionary: _____
     reason: _____
   - ☐ no

12. What is your priority when you BUY a new dictionary? Please tick up to three criteria of the following list which you regard as being important for your choice.
   - ☐ the number of words
   - ☐ a reasonable price
   - ☐ convenient to carry about
   - ☐ the number of examples
   - ☐ the reputation of the publisher
   - ☐ its relevance to my needs

13. How often do you consult your English dictionaries?
   - ☐ every day
   - ☐ three/four times a week
   - ☐ once a week
   - ☐ less often
   - ☐ hardly ever

14. What are your main reasons for looking up a word in a dictionary?

- ☐ spelling
- ☐ meaning
- ☐ grammar
- ☐ pronunciation
- ☐ usage (examples)
- ☐ derivatives, compounds (e.g. "guidance" and "guide-book" are
- ☐ derived from "guide")
- ☐ phrasal verbs (e.g. get up)
- ☐ idioms (e.g. head over heels)
- ☐ collocations (e.g. fill in a form)
- ☐ other: _____

15. For which purpose(s) do you use your bilingual dictionary mostly?

- ☐ writing
- ☐ reading
- ☐ translation
- ☐ other: _____

16. For which purpose(s) do you use your monolingual dictionary mostly?

- ☐ writing
- ☐ reading
- ☐ speaking
- ☐ other: _____

17. What kind of problems do you often encounter when looking up words in an English-English dictionary?

- ☐ word is not there
- ☐ information I need is not given
- ☐ definition is not clear
- ☐ entry is too long
- ☐ examples are not helpful
- ☐ word-combination is not given

- ☐ cross-references are necessary
- ☐ other: _____

18. What particular information do you feel is missing or not well presented in your monolingual dictionaries?

_____

_____

_____

19. Have you had any training in using dictionaries?

- ☐ yes
  - where: _____
  - how long: _____
- ☐ no

20. If you were taught how to use English dictionaries, do you think that this training helped you to use dictionaries more effectively?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

21. Do you know any computerised dictionaries for learners of English?

- ☐ no
- ☐ yes
  - which: _____

22. Which dictionaries on CD-ROM have you already used for learning English?

- ☐ Collins Cobuild on CD-ROM
- ☐ Collins Collocations
- ☐ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary on CD-ROM
- ☐ Longman Interactive English Dictionary
- ☐ Longman Interactive American English Dictionary
- ☐ Electronic Oxford Wordpower Dictionary
- ☐ other: _____

23. What do you like about these computerised dictionaries for learning English?

_____

_____

24. Would you use an electronic dictionary more often if that was possible?

☐ yes

☐ no

reason:

_____

_____

25. Do you regard yourself as an efficient dictionary user?

☐ yes

☐ no

reason:

_____

_____

26. Add any other points you want to make about your experience with dictionaries.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you again for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

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